WITH COSSACK AND CONVICT

A Serial Story of Strange Adventure.

By WILLIAM MURRAY GRAYDON.

A Tale of Far Siberia—Thrilling Experiences in the Penal Settlements of Russia—The Strange Tangling of the Web of Fate That Confused the Identity of an American Traveler With a Fleeing Nihilist.

SYNOPSIS OF CHAPTERS PREVIOUSLY PUBLISHED.

Andre and Paul Dagmar are the sons of Count Vasily Dagmar, who married an American. Andre holds a high position in the Russian army at St. Petersburg, but Paul has always been a black sheep, and under the name Serge Masloff becomes a leading spirit among the Nihilists.

At the opening of the story he has got into trouble, and obtains from his brother a letter to Colonel Jaroslav, inspector of the third section of police. Having secured admission to his presence in this way, he strikes the colonel down, possesses himself of some documents, and, under the name of Nicholas Pashua, boards the express for Berlin. Andre's connection with his brother's deed is discovered, he is deprived of his rank of captain, and exiled from St. Petersburg, under the command to report to Colonel Sudekin, at Irktusk, in the heart of Siberia.

While the villain Paul is speeding toward Wirballen, the Russian frontier town, bound for Germany, Donald Chumleigh, a young man of about the same age, is hurrying toward it from the opposite direction. He is an American, a resident of Philadelphia, although he was born in St. Petersburg (where his father had been engaged in business), and lived there until he was ten. He has kept up his knowledge of the Russian language, and now, after the death of his parents, he intends visiting his birthplace before settling down to the study of law.

At Wirballen, where he must change cars, he takes a light lunch, and then, as there is a little time to wait, falls asleep in the station. When he wakes he finds that his train has gone on and is fain to hire a cab and seek a hotel in which to spend the night. But the driver is drunk, the horse runs away, and breaking loose from the carriage disappears, leaving Donald on a bridge in the outskirts of the town. Here he encounters a stranger, and applies to him for assistance in his plight.

CHAPTER IV.

The Stranger at the Bridge.

We must return for a brief interval to Serge Masloff. He occupied a sleeping berth in the rear coach of the Berlin express, and during the long ride from St. Petersburg he slept most of the time, for his passport gave him a sense of perfect security, and he believed himself as safe as though he were already in Paris.

About midnight—knowing that Wirballen was not many miles distant—he slipped on his coat and sat by the window. For the first time a vague feeling of danger oppressed him—which he tried in vain to shake off—and when the train at length began to slacken speed in a locality which Masloff recognized by certain landmarks as the outskirts of Wirballen, he forced open the window by his side with a trembling hand and leaned out.

It was well for him that he did so. Less than one hundred yards ahead the track was crossed by one of the suburban streets—a fact which was indicated by a glimmering row of gas jets—and at the point of intersection stood a man waving a red lantern, the light of which shone faintly on a group of horsemen drawn up by the side of the track.

Like a flash Serge Masloff comprehended the situation, incredible as it seemed. His crime and escape—even his real identity—had been discovered by the police, and now they were stopping the train on the outskirts of Wirballen—as is often done in such cases—so that his arrest could be effected secretly.

He did not pause to think what error could have led to his detection. It was not until long afterward that he remembered the letter he had tossed so carelessly on the fire. He knew the Cossacks waiting for the stoppage of the train were acting on orders flashed over the wires from St. Petersburg—and as desperate situations require desperate action, he squeezed hurriedly through the window of the coach, clung by his hands for an instant and then dropped.

The train was still moving, but he landed unhurt by the side of the track, and, rising to his feet, plunged at once into the friendly gloom, hearing behind him as he ran a shout from some one on the coach he had just left, probably one of the trainmen.

A moment later the long line of coaches came to a full stop, and after a brief interval of silence the furious clatter of hoofs echoed on the hard ground. All doubt was now gone. The Cossacks had discovered the daring escape of their intended prisoner and were separating to search the vicinity.

Serge Masloff ran swiftly away from the track for a distance of fifty yards or more, and then turned sharply to the left, hoping temporarily to check his pursuers. The strategem was successful. He crouched low as half a dozen Cossacks dashed by, and then ran on toward the distant lights of the town, for he knew that in Wirballen lay his only safety. He had friends there who would hide him for a time, if he could only find them.

Several times the scattered horsemen came very close, but he covered half a mile without detection, and finally gained the edge of a deep ravine through which flowed a shallow stream. He plunged down into the bed of this without hesitation, and followed his course toward the town, now wading breast deep in the water, now scrambling through the bushes that lined the foot of the steep bank.

This breathing spell gave him an opportunity to think over the situation, and his heart sank at the gloomy prospect that faced him. He knew that the police would scour the surrounding country and search Wirballen high and low for such a famous criminal as Serge Masloff. Even now he was penned up like a rat in a trap, and unless he could find some one to befriend him and offer him a hiding place he must surely be caught.

But the chances were terribly against him. At this time of night he could not find the few men whom he knew in Wirballen—he did not even know their addresses. He dared not go to the railway station, for he was well aware that it would be closely watched, and in this belief he was correct; for, as has been already shown, the authorities took the extra precaution of sending gendarmes and Cossacks there to meet the incoming train, in case the signal to stop on the outskirts should not be heeded. Moreover—even if suitably disguised—he could not hope to cross the frontier without a passport. The one he had in his possession now was useless.

The prospect was black as midnight. Speedy arrest and punishment stared Serge Masloff in the face, and he inwardly anathematized himself for the stupidity—though he knew not what it was—that had thwarted his plans.

He was in this desperate mood when the two banks of the ravine gave place to built-up walls of masonry—a sign that the stream was approaching the limits of the town. Beyond him he could see the shadowy outlines of several bridges and the distant glimmer of street lamps. He knew that it would not be safe to go farther, so he cautiously waded to the first bridge and climbed to the top of the wall by means of the cavities in the stones. He sat there for a moment in the shadow of the parapet listening to the distant clatter of hoofs that rose on the still night air. For the present he was safe. The Cossacks had failed to track him.

All at once the rumble of wheels was heard coming closer and closer. The fugitive peered over the top of the parapet and saw the approaching vehicle. He smiled grimly when the carriage struck the other end of the parapet, and when the horse tore from the shaft and ran madly up the road he followed the animal with his eyes until it vanished in the gloom.

He saw Donald Chumleigh climb out of the wrecked carriage with his valise and wraps in his hand, and that instant an idea so daring as to be little short of madness flashed into Sergeant Masloff's mind.

"The man is a traveler," he muttered aloud. "I wonder if he has a passport."

Quick as the inspiration seized him he rose to his feet, circled around the end of the parapet, and walked swiftly over the bridge toward the carriage.

To Donald the appearance of this stranger was a welcome sight. He was sleepy and tired and wanted to reach a hotel, but he did not know where to find one, nor could he rely on the intoxicated driver for the information. His pressing need banished the customary sense of prudence which under other circumstances would have asserted itself at meeting a stranger in this lonely spot and at such an hour.

As the man drew near Donald was favorably impressed by his appearance. He was of about the same build as himself and neatly dressed—though the fact that his clothes were wet escaped Donald's observation in the semi-darkness.

"I have met with an accident," said Donald. "My stupid driver seems to have lost his way. I am an American and was passing through Wirballen on my way to St. Petersburg. I was so unfortunate as to miss my train. My driver was trying to find the Hotel Moscow, but I don't believe he knows where it is. Can you guide me to it? I am sorry to trouble you at such a time of night, but my need is very urgent, for I am a stranger here."

"Yes," said Masloff briefly. "I think I can assist you, but you speak the Russian tongue very plainly for an American—pardon me for saying so."

"I learned it years ago," replied Donald candidly. "I lived in St. Petersburg at the time. My name is Chumleigh—Donald Chumleigh."

At the mention of this name Masloff started violently. He tried to speak, but though his lips moved no words came. Donald did not observe the stranger's agitation.

"Yes," he continued, "that is how I come to know your language so well. I have purposely kept up my acquaintance with it."

Still Masloff made no reply. His eyes were fixed intently on Donald, scanning him from head to foot.

The embarrassing silence was broken by the driver, who seemed to have become suddenly sobered by the accident.

"Just stay here a moment, your honor," he said, "and I'll be back with the horse. He can't go far, you see, and as for the harness—I can easily mend that. I'll have you at the Hotel Moscow in half an hour."

Without waiting for a reply he ran up the street and disappeared.

Donald turned to Masloff.

"I will be under great obligation to you if you will accompany me to the Hotel Moscow, provided the fellow brings the horse back in a reasonable time," he said. "I am afraid to trust him again, though he appears to be sober enough now."

"I will gladly do you that service," replied Masloff.

He came a step nearer and then paused. The driver was out of sight and hearing by this time, but the silence of night was disturbed by vague noises that seemed to come from different directions—a soft pounding like the distant patter of hoofs.

"There seems to be quite a commotion in the town," remarked Donald. "Something unusual must be going on."

"Yes," said Masloff, in a low voice, "you are right. Something is the matter."

He glanced uneasily up and down the street, and then made a sudden rapid movement toward Donald—a movement so menacing in its nature that the latter instantly suspected some foul design on the part of the stranger, and tried to escape by dodging around the carriage.

Too late! With an agile bound Masloff had his victim by the throat. Donald uttered one low, choking cry, and then he was hurled backward against the parapet of the bridge.

CHAPTER V.

A Lost Identity.

Serge Masloff's lucky star was surely in the ascendant that night. In the fall that followed his assault on Donald the latter struck the back of his head on the stone parapet of the bridge and rolled over to the ground without sound or motion.

A gleam of satisfaction shone in Masloff's eyes. He hastily produced a small vial and bent over his victim, who already showed signs of returning consciousness, for the blow had been a very slight one.

Masloff opened the vial—which at once diffused a strong odor of chloroform—and saturating a handkerchief with part of the contents, he pressed it against Donald's nose and held it there until it had thoroughly done its stupefying work.

A hasty glance showed Masloff that the coast was clear, and without hesitation he stripped off his own wet clothes, and then with skillful hands he divested Donald of his neat suit of English tweed. A moment or two later the clever transformation was effected. Masloff stood in the garments of his victim, and Donald was arrayed in the Russian's well-worn suit and light gray cloak.

This last task proved very difficult—for it is no easy matter to put soaking wet clothes on an unconscious man—but Masloff finally completed it and surveyed his work with satisfaction. Both men were of the same size and build, and the attire of each fitted the other perfectly. The contents of the pockets remained unchanged with the exception of Masloff's purse, which he placed on his own person. He had in addition Donald's watch and chain, and a packet containing bank notes, letters of credit, and, what was of more value than all, the latter's passport.

Masloff next examined his victim's leathern traveling bag, which held only clothes, toilet articles, and a bunch of letters and papers.

Then, after applying the chloroformed handkerchief a second time, he lifted Donald in his strong arms and placed him inside the carriage in an upright position. He closed the door and picked up the traveling bag.

"Safe for the present," he said aloud, as he glanced up and down the street. "And now for a temporary hiding place. No train leaves for Berlin until 9 o'clock in the morning. If things turn out as I think they will I can safely take that train. It is even possible that I can venture back to St. Petersburg. This has been a strange night's adventure. To think that I should meet that man here—and that he should be the means of my escape! It is wonderful, and it will be more marvelous still if he fails to prove his identity and suffers in my place. That is hardly possible—and yet stranger things have happened. Well, it will be so much the better for me."

With a glance at the carriage and a quick scrutiny of the long, gloomy street, Serge Masloff hurried away in the direction of the town, and was soon out of sight.

Barely five minutes later the driver returned, leading the runaway horse, which he had succeeded in catching. At first he believed that his passenger had become tired of waiting and had gone away, but when he peeped through the carriage door he saw Donald leaning back on the seat. He called several times, but received no response.

"The poor fellow has gone to sleep," he muttered. "And little wonder at it. It's taking me a long time to find the Hotel Moscow—thanks to Ivan Padrosky's bad vodka—but I'll soon be there now."

He backed the horse into the shafts, mended the broken harness as well as he was able, and in a short time the carriage was rattling over the stony ground toward the lights of Wirballen.

The Russian was thoroughly sober now. He drove in and out through the narrow streets, and finally turned into a broader thoroughfare and drew up before a gloomy building of painted brick. A bright light streamed from the windows, and on the glass transom over the door were these words:

HOTEL MOSCOW.

The driver sprang from his seat and opened the carriage door.

"Here you are at last," he called out cheerily. "Hotel Moscow, your honor."

The next instant he reeled back in amazement as Donald stepped feebly out and groped his way across the pavement. The effect of the drug was just passing off, and he did not as yet realize what had happened. He looked up at the hotel and then turned to the amazed driver.

"Where is my—my satchel?" he demanded stupidly. "And how did my clothes get wet? This is the Hotel Moscow, is it? All right. I'm sleepy and want to go to bed. Tell me how much I owe you and I'll give you the money at once."

The Russian looked at Donald with a white, scared face. Was this man in the wet clothes and gray cloak the same neatly clad gentleman whom he had taken up at the railway station an hour or two before—or was it a different person altogether? No; that could not be. He had the same face and he wanted the Hotel Moscow.

A sudden suspicion of foul play and of the probable result to himself flashed into the driver's head. He glanced up and down the street. It was empty. No one had seen the carriage arrive. His only escape from a bad scrape was in immediate flight.

"It don't matter about the money," he whispered hurriedly to Donald. "You can pay it another time. There is the hotel—just in front of you." Then he mounted the box, drove furiously down the street, and vanished around the first corner.

Donald looked helplessly after the departing vehicle, and then walked unsteadily across the pavement. The name of the hotel caught his eye, and he opened the door and stepped in.

The office of the Hotel Moscow was a small, plainly furnished room. On one side was a buffet full of decanters and glasses. Behind this stood a middle-aged man conversing with an officer in police uniform, who was leaning over the buffet sipping a glass of wine. In the other end of the room was a red-shirted mujik fast asleep on a wooden bench.

The two men at the buffet scrutinized Donald sharply as he came toward them, and also instantly left the room after making a hasty sign to the buffet keeper, who nodded slightly.

"A glass of brandy, quick," said Donald, as he reached the buffet and caught hold of it for support.

The attendant poured out a glassful of the stuff and Donald began to sip it slowly. The door opened softly behind him and four gendarmes entered, led by the officer who had left the apartment a moment or two before. The latter advanced to the buffet and clapped Donald on the shoulder.

"I arrest you in the name of the Czar," he said sternly. "I warn you not to resist."

The sight of the gendarmes and the stimulating powers of the raw brandy threw off the lethargy that oppressed Donald, and his mind became suddenly clear. He remembered all, and the mystery of the wet clothes that he wore, and of the missing satchel, was a mystery no longer.

"What do you want with me?" he demanded of the officer in a tone of indignant surprise, and speaking in Russian, of course.

The officer made no reply. He plunged his hand into the pocket of Donald's coat and drew out a bundle of papers. As he hastily examined them a smile of triumph flitted across his stern features.

"This is the right person," he said, briefly. "Here are papers stolen from Colonel Jaroslav, a passport made out to Nicholas Pashu, and a photograph. Hullo! What does this mean? On the back of this card is written, 'Portrait of Serge Masloff.' This is a good night's work, men. Serge Masloff and Nicholas Fashua, the assassin, are one and the same. I can see the likeness clearly. The face in the portrait has a beard, it is true, but the other points are the same—light hair, ruddy skin, blue eyes; that is the description written on the back of the card. Yes, this is Serge Masloff beyond a doubt."

The officer glanced several times from the portrait to his prisoner, and then, completely satisfied, he put the packet of proofs into his pocket.

"You are making a great mistake," said Donald, speaking as calmly as possible. "I am an American and my name is Chumleigh. While you are wasting your time with me the real criminal is making his escape."

He then related to the officer all that had happened to him since he left the railway station—the accident at the bridge, the appearance of the stranger, and the assault which had deprived him of consciousness.

"That man must have drugged me and changed clothes," he added, in conclusion. "I knew nothing until I came to my senses in front of this hotel. It will be easy to trace the real criminal, for he has my passport and will probably try to use it. I hope you will find him, for he has taken everything I had—clothes, papers, and money."

It must be admitted that Donald's manner and speech were against him. The effect of the chloroform made his words incoherent. His face was flushed and his hands trembled—signs that could be readily construed as guilt.

The officer so read them.

"You are a clever liar," he said, "but no fairy tale of that kind can help you. Who ever knew an American to speak our language as fluently as you do? I would stake my very head that you are Serge Masloff. You may as well make a clean breast of it. It will be so much the worse for you if you try to deceive me. The whole affair is known, and the order for your arrest came by telegraph. It was a daring thing to jump from the moving train, but you see it has availed you nothing."

"I tell you I am innocent!" cried Donald, excitedly. "I don't know anything about Serge Masloff. My name is Donald Chumleigh."

He persisted in speaking in spite of the officer's harsh command to be silent, and finally he was overpowered by the gendarmes and dragged into the street. The officer lingered behind a moment to caution the buffet keeper to say nothing of the arrest, and then he led the way to the police station, which was less than a block distant.

Here Donald was thrown into a damp, gloomy cell and left to himself, with threats of violence if he persisted in making an outcry. He was now seriously alarmed. He knew—as only one acquainted with Russia could know—the gravity of his situation. He stood in the shoes of some Nihilist who had been fleeing from St. Petersburg after the commission of a crime. The real culprit was probably safely across the frontier by this time, and his victim had no means of proving his identity, since the police were convinced of his guilt and refused to listen to his explanations. Donald knew that his knowledge of the Russian tongue was against him. As the officer had said, it was an unheard of thing for an American to speak Russian fluently.

He had friends in St. Petersburg, it is true, but Donald knew only too well that he might never have a chance of communicating with them or with anyone who would believe his story.

Under the existing code of police regulations in Russia he could be—and probably would be—condemned without the formality of a trial, and either executed in the dungeons of the fortress or sent to the mines of Siberia for life.

These reflections so preyed upon Donald's mind that he felt at times as if he would go mad. For nearly an hour he paced his cell, striking his head more than once against the stone walls, and finally he lay down on the wretched bed and fell into a troubled sleep.

When he recovered consciousness two or three hours later his mind refused to grasp the full meaning of his surroundings. He was weak and bruised, and his wet clothes, combined with his mental worriment, had brought on a chill and high fever.

His speech was rambling and incoherent when the gendarme entered his cell about 10 o'clock in the morning. The prison surgeon who accompanied the officer declared that it would be dangerous to move the prisoner, but his warning could not be heeded, as the authorities at St. Petersburg—with whom the officer had been in communication—had ordered Serge Masloff to be sent on by the first train. The best that the surgeon could do was to prescribe medicine and a change of clothes, and these orders were promptly carried out.

When the noon train left Wirballen for St. Petersburg that day Donald Chumleigh was among the passengers. He was in a private compartment of the forward coach, tossing in the delirium of fever on his hard bed and muttering broken sentences in a language that was so much Greek to the three stern-faced guards who watched over him and at intervals dosed him with the medicine prescribed by the prison surgeon.

It was well for Donald Chumleigh that he did not realize the gloomy prospect which lay before him in case the fever did not carry off its victim.

His identity was completely lost. His protestations of innocence had fallen on deaf ears. The autocratic power wielded by the Russian police was such that no hope existed of his being able to reach the ear of any who would listen to his explanation.

By a chain of circumstantial evidence—each link of which was tightly forged—Donald Chumleigh had become Serge Masloff the Nihilist. The clothes on his person, the stolen documents found in the pocket of the cloak, the passport made out in the name of Nicholas Pashua, the photograph—which actually bore a chance resemblance to Donald—all these were indisputable facts.

As for the real Serge Masloff—it was not likely that any error of his would lead to the discovery of the mixed identities. He would play his cards too well for that.

Donald Chumleigh's situation could hardly have been more critical had he been in very truth the real criminal.

Fate sometimes plays queer freaks with a man's life, and both good and evil were destined to come from Donald Chumleigh's misfortunes.

CHAPTER VI.

By Order of the Czar.

After Paul Dagmar, alias Serge Masloff, left the apartments of his brother on the eventful morning of the 10th of April, Captain Dagmar donned his Cossack uniform, and then, forbidding his servant Sasha to disturb him, he locked his door, and paced up and down the room, stopping only at intervals to take a fresh cigarette from the silver case and light it. Every footfall on the floor beneath caused him to start and turn uneasily toward the door. He should have gone that morning to report to Colonel Jaroslav, but he was unable to summon sufficient courage to do so. After the breach of honor just committed he hesitated to enter the presence of his superior officer. Not until the dawn of another day could he feel at ease, and even then he knew that the sting of conscience would remain. He regretted having yielded so readily to the demands of his brother, and yet mingled with his remorse was a certain lightness of heart that it was all over at last—that the necessity for playing a double part was ended. Paul would escape, and absence would soon dim the memory of his notorious deeds. The closet skeleton of the Dagmar family would never stalk forth to horrify St. Petersburg society.

"Yes, the sacrifice—even of honor—was well worth the end," he reflected, and presently he became more composed and went out to dine at a cafe nearby on the Nevskoi Prospekt.

He returned at 3 o'clock with the satisfied feeling of one who has dined well, and tried, with the aid of a good cigar, to become absorbed in a new novel. The book proved interesting—it was the work of a noted French fictionist—and Captain Andre was soon held captive by it beyond his hopes. He did not hear the sound of wheels that stopped before the house shortly after 3 o'clock. He heard nothing, in fact, until a trampling noise rang through the hall, and then he sprang to his feet, dropping book and cigar.

The door was flung open without ceremony, and a tall, bearded man in the uniform of police entered. Behind him were three other men in plain clothes and in the background Sasha was visible, his face white with dread.

After the first terrible shock of surprise Captain Andre faced the intruders with a proud, calm bearing. Only the pallor of his cheek betrayed the agony in his heart.

"What do you want, Grodekoff?" he demanded, almost fiercely.

He knew the man well. Many a time he had given him orders for the arrest of various persons. Now the tables were reversed.

"I am sorry to say that I want you," replied Grodekoff, whose fluttering voice showed how painful was his mission. "Perhaps you know why. It is a very unpleasant affair, but I am confident that you will be able to explain all. It is not I that am responsible for your arrest. I am acting under higher orders."

"Explain yourself, Grodekoff," said Andre impatiently. His surprise was not feigned. He was at a loss to divine what had happened. "Has Paul betrayed me?" he wondered.

"Inspector Jaroslav was murderously assaulted at an early hour this morning," replied Grodekoff slowly. "The assassin gained admittance by a stamped order, and after committing the deed he escaped by the private exit. The inspector had given orders that he should not be disturbed, and no one ventured to enter the apartment until half an hour ago. Colonel Jaroslav was found lying back of his chair with a fractured skull. The assassin had been gone for hours. The inspector's recovery is almost hopeless."

Grodekoff paused and looked at Andre. The latter was standing in the same attitude. His teeth were clinched and the veins on his forehead stood out like whipcords.

"Go on," he muttered hoarsely.

"A charred paper was found on the floor," resumed Grodekoff, keeping his eyes fixed keenly on Andre. "It had evidently blown off the fire. The writing on the paper was legible. It was an order for a passport in the name of Nicholas Pashua. It was dated this morning and bore your signature."

Again Grodekoff paused and looked at Captain Dagmar inquiringly.

"Go on," said Andre, not moving a muscle.

"Nicholas Pashua will be arrested," continued Grodekoff, "if, as is believed to be the case, he left the city by the Warsaw express. Orders have been telegraphed to the frontier. But that is not his real name. Nicholas Pashua is supposed to be Serge Masloff, the Nihilist."

Andre's majestic bearing suddenly gave way. His limbs relaxed and he caught hold of the table for support.

"Paul has betrayed me," he muttered. "All is lost! My poor father!—how will he bear this blow?"

Grodekoff, seeing in Andre's face the consciousness of his guilt, at once became stern and brusque.

"Come! We must go. Give me your keys."

Andre gently handed them over and called to Sasha to bring him his cloak and hat.

"Where?" he asked of the officer, "to the fortress?"

Grodekoff nodded assent.

Andre was now outwardly composed. He bade farewell to Sasha, who was weeping bitterly, glanced about the pleasant apartments which he knew well he would never see again, and then signified that he was ready.

Grodekoff led the way down the stairs and Andre followed between two guards. The third man was left behind to affix seals to Andre's possessions until such time as a search should be ordered.

A closed drosky stood at the curb before the house. Grodekoff hurried his illustrious captive across the pavement, hoping to escape attention from the well-dressed throng that were moving along the Nevskoi Prospekt, but the journey, short as it was, did not pass without incident. As Andre was about leaping into the drosky an old and haggard woman, closely wrapped up in a cloak, tottered forward.

"Captain Dagmar," she cried shrilly, "I want to see you. I must speak with you."

She evidently did not comprehend that he was under arrest.

Andre's two companions hurried him into the drosky and sprang after him, closing the curtained door with a bang.

"Go ahead!" shouted Grodekoff to the driver as he mounted the box beside him, and the old woman was left on the sidewalk, gazing blankly at the vanishing equipage.

Andre's thoughts during that gloomy ride were varied and tumultuous. The identity and object of the old woman who had sought to speak with him perplexed him for a little while, but darker problems soon crowded this out of his mind.

The drosky rolled swiftly down the crowded Nevskoi Prospekt, along the famous Court Quay, majestic with palaces and mansions—among them the residence of Count Vasily Dagmar—and finally, crossing the Neva by a noble iron bridge, reached the grim and frowning fortress, the citadel of Peter and Paul, just as the afternoon sun was gleaming on the thin golden spire that marks the burial place of the Romanoffs—the last home of Czars past and Czars to come.

A few moments later Captain Andre Dagmar was an inmate of one of the dark, bomb proof cells.

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A week passed on. To Andre, locked up in silence and solitude, each of those seven days seemed an eternity in itself. To Donald Chumleigh, tossing in the delirium of fever on his hard bed in the hospital, the same period of time seemed nothing at all. At the end of that week the fate of both prisoners was decided—swiftly, secretly, and without the formality of a trial.

A few words will explain all. Count Vasily Dagmar, as soon as he was informed of the circumstances that had led to the arrest of both his sons, decided to save the family honor, and chose a bold expedient for the accomplishment of this purpose. His prominence and high standing obtained for him an audience with the Czar. He laid before the Emperor every circumstance connected with the sad affair—the real identity of his younger son, Paul, and the history of his wayward, evil life, as well as the brotherly affection, so basely betrayed, which had prompted Andre's attempt to save Paul at the sacrifice of his own honor. He pleaded, in consideration of the loyalty his family had ever shown to the Czar and his forefathers before him, that no rumor of this foul disgrace should reach the outer world, that Paul's life at least should be spared, and that Andre might be pardoned and restored to his rank.

Strange as it may seem, the Czar acceded to the first and second of these requests. He was deeply moved, no doubt, by the sad misfortunes of Count Vasily, and at the same time there were other mitigating circumstances, especially in the case of Andre, whose loyalty to the Czar was not called into question by the grave error he had committed.

To begin with, rigorous orders were issued by the Czar himself that the whole affair should be kept profoundly secret, and so well were these instructions carried out that none—with the exception of the Nihilists, who find out everything—even knew that the would-be assassin of Colonel Jaroslav had been caught or that Nicholas Pashua and Serge Masloff were one and the same. Later on these facts came out and were published in the papers, but the real identity of Serge Masloff still remained a secret.

The first order of the Czar was issued two days after the double arrest. At the close of that week, previously mentioned, when Donald Chumleigh was just beginning to throw off the fever, and lay in a weak, semi-conscious state, the order of his sentence came to the fortress. He was condemned to the mines of Kara for life. This was really no mitigation. Had not Colonel Jaroslav been on the way to recovery from his terrible wound, Donald would certainly have suffered death in the courtyard of the fortress.

(Continued Next Sunday.)